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ABSTRACT

Students enroll in community colleges for a variety of personal reasons, and many never intend to earn a degree. Measures of success, therefore, must take into account the diversity of students' objectives for enrollment and permit the college to distinguish between students who have achieved a satisfactory level of progress and those who have not. Five categories of student success/outcomes can be established: (1) successful students, including graduates and students who drop out with 30 or more credits and a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or greater; (2) probably successful students, including those who are enrolled full- or part-time or in remedial programs, those who withdraw with a GPA of 2.0 or greater, and those who drop out with less than 30 credits and a GPA of 2.0 or greater (3) unsuccessful students, including those who drop out with a GPA less than 2.0, those who drop out with no GPA, and those who are dropped by the college for poor scholarship or inadequate progress; (4) probably unsuccessful students, who withdraw with a GPA of less than 2.0; and (5) unclassifiable students, including those who stop out and those who withdraw with no GPA. The application of these categories to students who entered the Community College of Philadelphia in fall 1983 shows that, as of spring 1987, 15.0% were successful, 39.6% were probably successful, and 45.2% were unsuccessful. The categories were also applied to determine success rates by age, gender, race, area of study, and college-readiness at admission. (UCM)

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INSTITUTIONAL (In Brief) RESEARCH
COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA
CCP

IN-BRIEF #42
Wayne S. Obetz
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Community College serves a diverse population of students. Some come to work towards an Associate degree, some to gain transfer credit, others to take courses required by their professions, and still others to learn more about a selected topic with no degree nor vocational goals in mind. To apply any traditional measure of success, where success is defined as the attainment of a degree, would ignore the fact that many students never intended to earn a degree. Therefore it becomes necessary to construct a measure that adequately allows for both the diversity of student intentions at enrollment, and institutional baselines that will enable the separation of those who have achieved a satisfactory level of progress from those who have not. It is with this objective in mind that the following definitions of success and non-success are proposed.

For the purposes of these definitions, a "graduate" is anyone who has graduated, regardless of whether they are currently taking courses or not. A "dropout" is anyone who has taken courses in the past, has not graduated, is not currently enrolled, and will not re-enroll. A "stopout" is anyone who has taken courses in the past, has not graduated, is not currently

enrolled, but will re-enroll at some point in the future. A "withdrawing student" withdrew during the semester under investigation, and may or may not return in some subsequent semester. It is possible for a student to withdraw without receiving a GPA in a semester, provided that the withdraw takes place before the tenth week of courses begin. However, in order to be counted as a withdrawing student (as opposed to a stopout or dropout), the student must have attended classes through at least the third week of the semester.

Table 1
Classification of Students by Graduate and Enrollment Statuses

		Student enrolled?		
Status	Graduated?	Prior Semester(s)	Current Semester	Future Semester(s)
Graduate	Yes	Yes		
Enrolled student	No		Yes	
Withdrawing student	No		Through Week 3	
Stopout	No	Yes	No	Yes
Dropout	No	Yes	No	No

Notes: Current semester refers to the semester under investigation. In this analysis, current semester refers to Spring 1987.

A blank in the table indicates that regardless of the student's enrollment for that semester, their status will remain the same.

Success Categories for Student Outcomes

Successful students

Graduates
Dropped out with 30 or more credits and GPA 2.0 or greater

Probably successful students

Enrolled Full-time, Part-time, or in remedial program
Withdrew with GPA 2.0 or greater
Dropped out with less than 30 credits and GPA 2.0 or greater

Unsuccessful students

Dropped out with GPA less than 2.0
Dropped out with no GPA
Dropped for poor scholarship
Dropped for poor progress

Probably unsuccessful students

Withdrew with GPA less than 2.0

Not classifiable

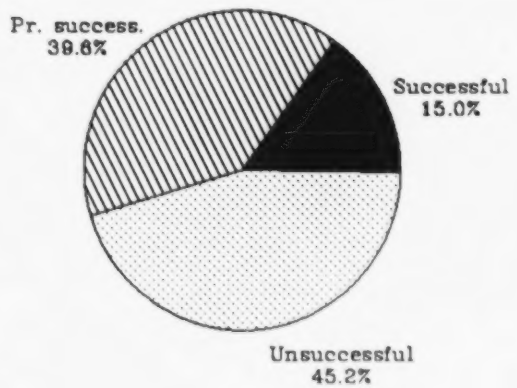
Stopped out
Withdrew with no GPA

With the exception of the subcategory of those who have dropped out with a GPA of 2.0 or greater and less than 30 credits, the probably successful, probably unsuccessful and not classifiable categories can be seen as transitory classifications. The students in these three categories are still enrolled (or will re-enroll) and will eventually end up in the more determined categories. As for those with less than 30 credits and an acceptable GPA, it can be said of these students

that they have left the College in good academic standing. However, unlike those who have completed at least 30 credits, these students have not been enrolled long enough for the College to collect sufficient evidence that they are in fact successful. On balance, they appear to be somewhat successful and therefore are considered probably successful.

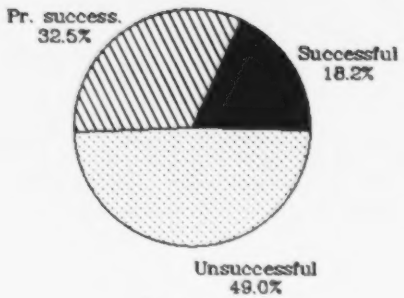
If the preceding definitions are accepted, then the results (as of Spring 1987) for the entering class of Fall 1983 can be represented as follows:

Outcome category, entered Fall 1983
as of Spring 1987

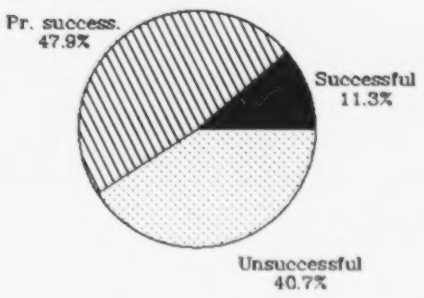


For the purposes of this graph, and all graphs following, the entering class is defined as those students who enrolled at the college for the first time in the Fall 1983 semester. Only those students who enrolled in credit courses at the Main Campus location are considered in the present analysis. In interpretting these graphs, it is useful to consult Table 1 attached to the end of this document. This table contains demographic information on the entering class analyzed here. Graphs show outcomes for all students for whom there was information available for the demographic variable being considered.

Outcome category, entered Fall 1983 by age

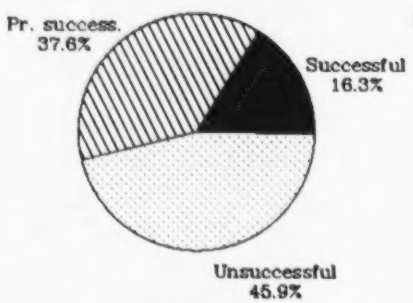


16 to 21

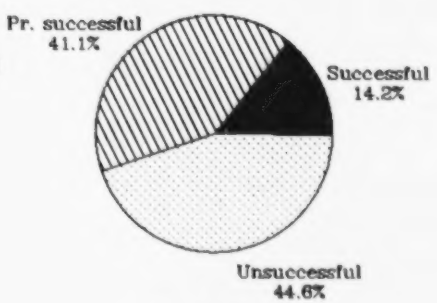


22 and over

Outcome category, entered Fall 1983 by sex

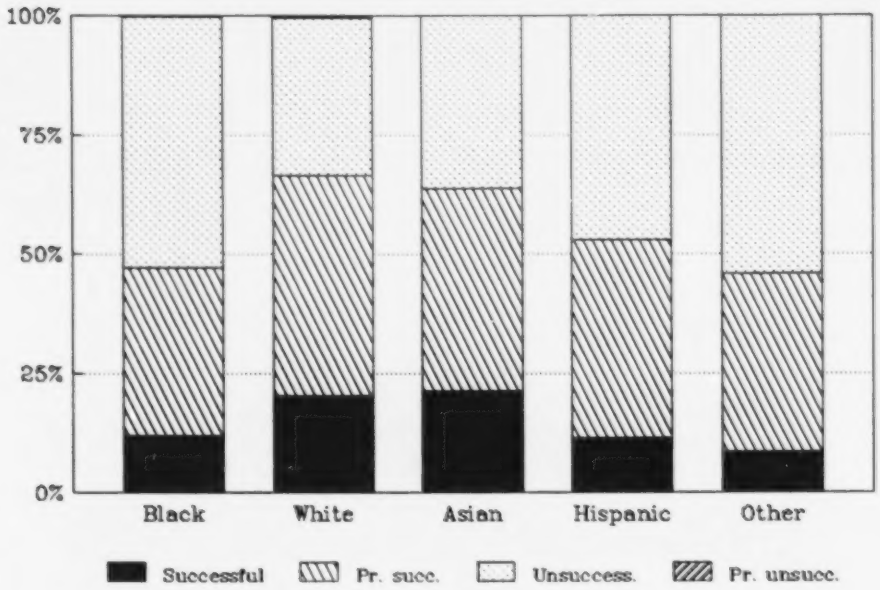


Male

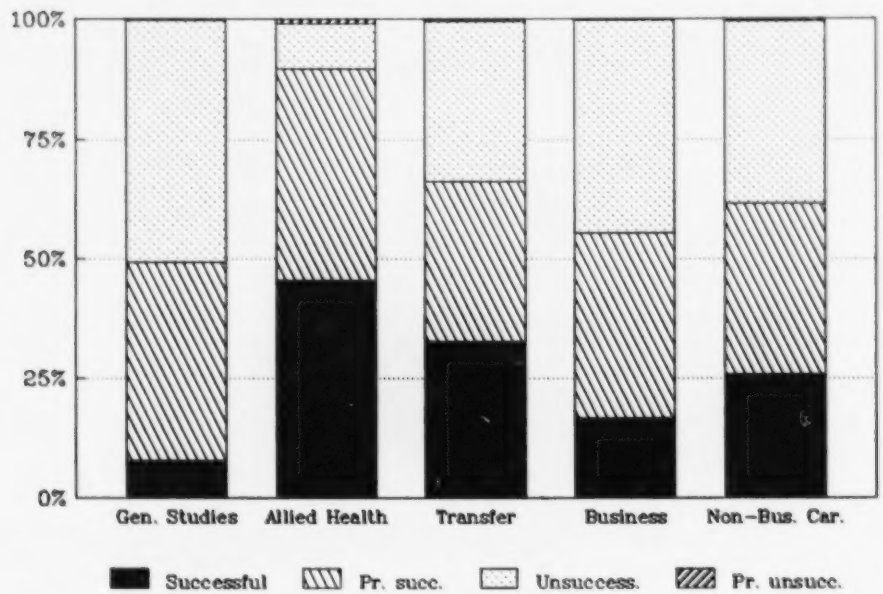


Female

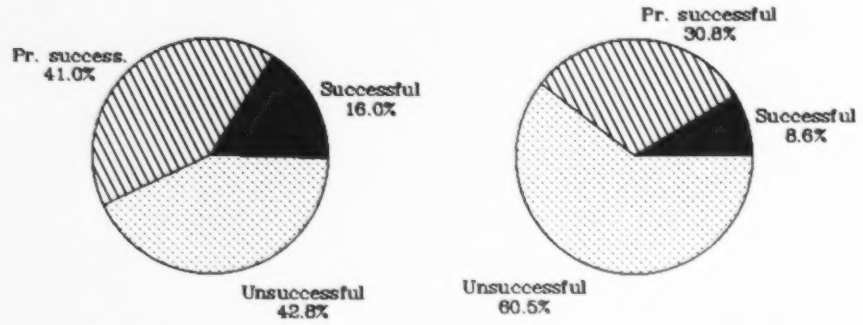
Outcome category, entered Fall 1983
by race



Outcome category, entered Fall 1983
by exiting curriculum cluster



Outcome category, entered Fall 1983
by college-readiness at admission



College ready Not college ready

Not college ready =
P2 A,B,C; ASK; ACT 101

TABLE 1

Distribution of age, sex, race, exiting curriculum cluster, and college-readiness at admission for the entering class of Fall 1983

	Count	Percent
Age		
16 to 21	1871	53.8%
22 and over	1606	46.2%
Sex		
Male	1398	40.2%
Female	2076	59.8%
Race		
Black	1681	48.3%
White	1150	33.0%
Asian	188	5.4%
Hispanic	181	5.2%
Other/Unknown	280	8.0%
Exiting Curriculum		
General Studies	1742	50.3%
Allied Health	108	3.1%
Transfer	184	5.3%
Business	1039	30.0%
Non-Bus. Career	387	11.2%
College-readiness at admission		
College ready	3006	86.4%
Not college ready	474	13.6%

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